

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KK094
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Name of Service:	Twinkles Creche & Montessori
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Address of Service:	Rosehill, Kells Road, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny
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Eircode:	R95 H950
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Name of Registered Provider:	Denis Brennan
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	19/02/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	40	PM	29
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child & Family Agency, Athy Road, Carlow.
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Inspection undertaken by:	Norma Thornton
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable.
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Description of service

Twinkles Crèche and Montessori is a registered full day childcare service located in the residential estate of Rosehill in Kilkenny city. The service provides sessional, part-time and full day childcare services for children aged 1 to 6 years of age, between the hours of 08:00 to 18:00, Monday to Friday.

The service operates from a purpose-built childcare premises in the centre of the estate and contains 5 classrooms, 3 classrooms for children aged 1 to 2 years and 8 months on the ground floor and 2 other classrooms providing early childhood care and education (ECCE) sessions and full day childcare for children aged 2 years 8 months to 6 years.

An outdoor area is provided at one side of the building, and the service has recently developed a nature trail at the other side of the building for the children to explore.

Staffing

There were nine staff members employed in the service, including a chef. The registered provider does not work in the service. Eight staff working directly with the children attending the service, held qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education, ranging from Level 5 to Level 7 on the national Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities.

The inspection focused on assessment of compliance under regulations 9, 10, 11, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 28.

A sampling process was used under regulations 10, 19 and 24. The scope of the inspection included the outdoor area and the classrooms in use on the day of inspection.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Additional Information

An Immediate Action Notice (IAN) was issued to the registered provider on the day of inspection on observation of an immediate risk identified under regulation 23 Safe Sleep.

It is acknowledged that an appropriate response was submitted to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate on the 20 February 2025.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) There was a designated person in charge present and a named deputy designated person in charge who was able to deputise as required.

(b)The designated person in charge was present in the service throughout the inspection.

(c) There was a clear management structure outlined on the notice board for parents/guardians to see in the main entrance area of the service and the inspector observed throughout the inspection that each staff member was aware of their roles and responsibilities.

(2) Staff files for nine staff members employed in the service were reviewed by the inspector.

(a)(b) There were two validated references on file for each of the nine staff members from either a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting certificates were available on file for each of the nine staff members employed in the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was available for two staff members who had lived in a state other than Ireland for a period of longer than six months.

(3) The registered provider demonstrated that the procedures specified in paragraph (2) were completed for all new staff members who had commenced employment in the service since the last inspection on the 21 February 2024.

(4) There was evidence that each staff member, who as part of their role in the service was to work directly with the children, held a qualification ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 on the national Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) framework.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The following policies were reviewed and in place in the service on the day of inspection, Fire Safety Policy, Outdoor play policy, policy on use of Internet and Photographic and Recording Devices, Recruitment policy, Settling in Policy, Staff training policy, Supervision policy, Staff Absence policy, Infection Control policy, Safe Sleep policy, Healthy eating policy and Accident and Incident policy. It is acknowledged that the current designated person in charge was carrying out an annual review of each policy in the service at the time of inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1) There was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children in attendance at the service.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children as required by Schedule 6 was maintained as follows during the inspection:

On the ground floor.

The Ladybird Room – (Room 1) There were 5 children, aged 1 to 2 years, directly supervised by 1 staff member in the morning and 4 children, aged 1- 2 years directly supervised by 1 staff member in the evening.

The Lady bird Room – (Room 2) There were 5 children, aged 1 to 2 years, directly supervised by 1 staff member, throughout the day.

The Buzzy Bees Playgroup – AM -There were 12 children aged 2 to 3 years, directly supervised by 2 staff members.

PM – There were 9 children aged 2 to 3 years directly supervised by 2 staff members.

On the first floor,

The Caterpillar Room –AM- There were 9 children aged 3 to 4 years, directly supervised by 1 staff member.

PM- This room was closed.

The Butterfly Room - AM- There were 9 children aged 4 to 5 years, directly supervised 2 staff members.

PM- There were 11 children aged 3 to 5 years, directly supervised 2 staff members.

(8) The designated person in charge demonstrated with the documented staff roster that there were always at least two adults on the premises while any children were present.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that no corporal punishment is inflicted on a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

Physical Indoor Environment.

The inspector observed that there was development and quality improvement in the physical environments provided in the ground floor classrooms since the last inspection. In the Ladybird classrooms there were areas of interest which included rest and reading areas, soft play areas, small rocking toys, a mini play kitchen unit, activity centres, a small ice-cream stand musical chairs, bead and maze tables and low-level shelves which provided the young children access to treasure baskets of sensory toys and activity games appropriate to their age and development. A comfortable adult armchair had been provided in Ladybird room 1 for the staff to sit and cuddle children when needed.

In the Busy Bees room, a much-improved soft rest and reading area had been created comprised of two child sized bean bags, two soft couches, a circular rug and a bookshelf. The kitchen area had visually labelled drawers of equipment so that the children could see where play resources were stored and were observed to return play equipment to the correct storage container.

The transport area had also been visually labelled to indicate what play equipment was stored where and provided some ride on toys. A construction area, dress-up area and sensory area were also clearly visible. Children's identity and belonging had also been integrated into the physical environments with a "Family Wall", "Birthday Wall" and community walls being displayed in the classrooms. Children's family heritage was included in the family wall with national flags, special and favourite dishes displayed. Each child had either an individual photographic labelled hook or shelf for them to store their school bag and belongings in.

Outdoor Environment.

There was a cobbled outdoor play area which could be accessed directly from the Busy Bees classroom or through the front entrance and through a side entrance gate. This area provided clear space for children to run, ride on the tricycles and scooters provided, play basketball or play imaginatively.

It is acknowledged that the service had also developed a nature trail at the other side of the premises which included a bark mulch trail surrounding a large monkey tree.

Basic and Individual Care Needs of the Children.

The inspector observed that the children were comfortable and happy in their classrooms, familiar with the staff directly looking after them, calling them by name and confidently asking for help when required. Children in the Ladybird classrooms enjoyed a snack of fruit, banana and orange pieces and organic corn snacks at 10:00 hours and were observed sitting in their highchairs placed in a circle so they could all enjoy their snack time together. As children finished their snacks and drinks of water and displayed cues that they wanted to get out of the highchairs, their faces and hands were wiped, and they were lifted out to go and play freely.

The older children brought their snacks from home and all children attending the service had a hot meal at lunch time and another meal at teatime, if remaining for full day childcare. All meals were provided and prepared onsite by the designated chef.

Each room had a drinks station so children could access drinking water whenever they needed.

A three -week menu plan was displayed for parents and children to see on the parents notice board, in the entrance hall. While dinner was served at 12:00 and on the day of inspection consisted of fish fingers, mashed potato and beans, other dinner options offered during the week included chicken tikka masala, shepherd pie, baked ham, mashed potato and vegetables, chicken past bake, chicken nuggets and chips, chicken and bacon carbonara, lasagne and spaghetti bolognese.

Tea examples included ham and cheese sandwiches, sausage rolls, pizza wraps and fruit, fruit scones and jam, puff pastry pinwheels, toasted sandwiches and yogurts.

The inspector observed that the staff in each classroom had knowledge and awareness of specific children's food allergies and food requirements to comply with individual children's religious beliefs.

Staff were observed to respond to children's nappy changing and toileting needs supporting them when required and ensuring that their dignity and privacy was preserved. The inspector observed that the children and the staff carried out handwashing promptly post nappy changing and toileting procedures, messy play and outdoor play and prior to snack and mealtimes.

Staff were observed responding promptly to individual children displaying cues of tiredness, discomfort or hunger and ensuring that each child's needs were met when required. Children's daily schedules which had been discussed with parents/guardians were followed but staff were observed to also be flexible in meeting the physical and emotional needs of a child and facilitating naps, snacks and movement breaks as required.

Children's positive behaviour was promoted with positive reinforcement on achieving activities, being kind to friends, sharing and solving any conflict.

(2) The registered provider, designated person in charge and staff had implemented measures such as policy and child safeguarding training so that there was no corporal punishment permitted in the service. Staff were well informed of policies in place regarding the safeguarding of the children in their care.

(3) The inspector observed that the designated person in charge and staff present on the day of inspection ensured that no practices that were disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful were carried out in respect of any pre-school child attending the service. The inspector observed that staff were caring, spoke gently and slowly to the children and responded promptly in a positive and nurturing manner to each child's needs.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

The premises was secured with a tall metal railing and a secured outdoor gate to the play areas. A keypad call system secured the entrance so that no unauthorised persons could enter the service, and children could not exit the service unsupervised.

Infection Control:

On observation of the physical environment and practice on the day of inspection, staff demonstrated that they supported and encouraged children with handwashing post toileting, nappy changing, outdoor play and messy play. Staff ensured that there were adequate supplies of liquid hand soap and paper towelling available and that the warm running tap water was maintained at less than 43°C for the children and staff to wash their hands comfortably and correctly.

Surfaces were cleaned with disinfectant and paper towelling in between uses and staff demonstrated that there was a procedure in place for the safe sterilisation of soothers and play equipment.

Administration of Medication:

The designated person in charge and staff present clearly demonstrated an awareness and knowledge of the procedure to be carried out for administration of various types of medication to any child in the service, in line with the service's administration of medication policy.

Safe Sleep:

There were two sleep rooms available on the lower ground, each directly adjacent to each Ladybird rooms. A clear viewing panel was observed between each classroom and the sleep room.

The inspector observed that both sleep rooms had their air temperatures maintained between 16 to 20 °C and were ventilated with a mechanical temperature regulating ventilation system.

Each sleep room contained three standard cots, each prepared with suitable bed linen for each individual child.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

The spaces between the cots and stackable beds in the Lady Bird 2 sleep room were not maintained at 50 cm apart as is recommended infection control practice.

Safe Sleep:

The following non-compliances were identified regarding safe sleep practices and policy implementation. There was no constant adult presence and supervision in the room as recommended by the Early Years Inspectorate “Guidance for the Early Learning and Care sector on sleep”. At 13:30 hours the inspector observed the following sleeping arrangements.

1. In the Lady Bird Room 2 sleep room there were three children asleep in the three cots and one child, aged 2 years asleep on a stackable bed between two cots.
2. In the Lady Bird 2 classroom the inspector found two children aged between 15 months and 2 years asleep on stackable beds and two children, aged 1 year and 1 year and 1 month asleep in bouncers.

Two children were sleeping in bouncers which are not recommended as suitable safe sleeping equipment, by safe sleep best practice research for children to sleep or nap in.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The following corrective and preventive actions have been submitted by the registered provider.

Corrective & Preventive Actions

Infection Control:

- The Crèche has 2 sleep rooms with 3 cots in each one that are evenly spaced out over 50cm to comply with Regulation 23.
- Both Management and Staff ensure that adequate space is maintained between the stackable beds when laid out for sleep times, and ensure Stackable beds are not put in the same sleep room as the cots.

Safe Sleep:

- the stackable beds have been removed from the sleep room.
- The stackable beds are now stored under the stairs and accessible when needed for sleep.

Stackable beds are used by children over 2 years old and are used in ladybird room 2, which allows the beds to be spaced out, so the children have adequate space to sleep. This change was completed 20th February 2025 as.

- Staff members are now present in the room when children are asleep on stackable beds, to prevent safety risks

- Cots are now in use for all children under 2 years old and stackable beds are in use for children 2 years and older.
- On 20th February 2025, as part of the immediate action notice, a meeting was held with the parents of the 2 children who were “sleeping in bouncers”. A sleep plan was drawn up with the parent, early years educator and the manager- to try to and transition the children into a cot in the crèche.
- Bouncers have been removed from the lady bird room and are no longer in use for sleep or any other use- during the day- tummy time and floor play are promoted- instead of the use of bouncers.
- The parents information pack- updated February 2025, now states that children attending the crèche will need to sleep in a cot, floor bed or stackable bed- no other sleeping equipment can be used.
- All staff members have been trained in the new safe sleep guidelines and are now fully aware of how important safe sleep practices are which includes adequate space in between cots and stackable beds of at least 50cm.
- Stackable beds are no longer stored in the sleep room as the sleep room needs to be accessible to the children using the cots. There is a designated area for the storage of the stackable beds, and after use, are put back to this designated area under the stairs.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of sleep room with three standard cots spaces at an adequate distance of 50 centimetres apart.

Photographic evidence of storage area for stackable beds.

Evidence of proposed floor beds to be purchased for any children that may require them.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted are appropriate to address the non-compliances. The implementation of these actions will be reviewed on next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) The designated person in charge and staff ensured that each child was checked in and out of the service daily on their attendance.

(3)(a) The designated person in charge and staff ensured that no person other than a preschool child attending the service, persons dropping or collecting a child, employees or unpaid workers could enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee.

(b) There was a visitors record book present, which any visitors to the service were required to complete once authorised entry by a staff member.

The record maintained the date of entry, person's name, contact number, reason for entry, staff member approving access and check in and out times.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and

(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

- (1) A staff roster demonstrated that there were three staff members qualified in first aid responder (FAR) training present in the service on the day of inspection and further demonstrated that there was always at least one staff member trained in FAR present in the service.
- (2) (a)(b) There was a suitably equipped first aid box present in each room which was checked monthly and was always available to the staff for the children.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-

(a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and

(b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,

(b) an employee, and

(c) an authorised person.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1)(a) Records of fire drills carried out in the service were maintained. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 04 February 2025.

(b) A record was maintained of any service and maintenance of the fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarms. On review of records the inspector observed that the last maintenance check for the firefighting equipment was recorded as having taken place on the 01 March 2024, and for the smoke alarms, was recorded as having taken place on the 07 August 2024.

(2) These records were maintained in the service and available for inspection.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were clearly displayed inside the main entrance.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate displaying adequate insurance for a full day care childcare service for up to 54 preschool children was available for inspection. The period of cover was from the 02 July 2024 to the 27 March 2025.